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Adventure Compendium

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Dedication: Special thanks to Steven J. Black, Eike-Christian Bertram, Lars Heitmann, Kathy Schad, Donovan Winch, and Jason U. Wallace! James would especially like to thank his "long-suffering" gaming group—guys and gals, you know who you are.

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ISBN: 978-1-877451-00-3

January 2007—eBook Edition—20070131

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The outline is as important as the content.

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INTRODUCTION

Adventures? They make an adept's life special!

• **Krolok, Ork Nethermancer** •



The age of **Earthdawn** is an era of magic that existed thousands of years ago in our world's dim past. Magic touched every aspect of the lives of men and women of the Name-giver races: humans, elves, dwarfs, orks, trolls, windlings, t'skrang, and obsidimen. However, as the levels of magic rose, so, too, did the dangers in the world. The rise of magic brought Horrors to Earth, creatures from the depths of astral space that devoured all life in their path. For four centuries, the peoples of Barsaive hid underground as the Horrors devastated their lands during the dark time that came to be called the Scourge.

Now, the people of Barsaive have emerged from their sealed kaers and citadels, ready to fight for life and freedom against the remaining Horrors and the oppressive Theran Empire. From all across Barsaive, bold heroes step forward to champion their land, arming themselves for their daunting task with powerful magical spells and treasures. Through magic, skill, and daring, Barsaive's heroes strive to heal the world of the scars left by the Scourge. In so doing, they become Barsaive's living legends.

The **Adventure Compendium** contains a number of roleplaying adventures set in the world of **Earthdawn**. While each of the adventures in this compilation—**Mists of Betrayal**, **Terror in the Skies**, **Infected**, **Shattered Pattern**, and each of the **Blades** adventures—can be run on its own, this volume features additional adventure hooks and gamemaster guidelines for running them as a campaign.

GAMEMASTERING NOTES

This book contains everything needed to start an **Earthdawn** campaign, but is also flexible enough to be used in a currently running campaign. The **Earthdawn Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums** are both required to use the adventures in this book.

Each adventure is suited for three to five players using characters of varying Circles (see below). If necessary, the gamemaster may adjust the individual encounters that make up each adventure to suit larger or smaller groups. For example, if the group has only three players and their characters battle two dozen orks because the adventure says so, the game session is likely to end very quickly. To avoid such problems, the gamemaster should feel free to change any part of the adventures that he deems fit. However, each adventure should pose a challenge for the players. Without the risk of failure, the game becomes dull and no one has fun. The gamemaster should ensure that the player characters only survive the adventure through hard work, smart playing, and a little bit of luck.

Though gamemaster characters can play significant roles in these adventures, the gamemaster should not allow them to overshadow the player characters. When the adventurers attempt to overcome a particular obstacle, or try to think of a way out of some dangerous situation, avoid using gamemaster characters to tell the players how to resolve the problem. After all, if players make the right choices all the time, both they and the gamemaster have a lot less fun. Whenever possible let your group of players make their own beds and squirm in them. To help the player characters out of trouble, these adventures include several loyal companions who try to help their friends when needed. These gamemaster characters serve as a safety net for the adventurers, and also draw them deeper into the story as they come to know the people they live and fight beside.

To run the adventures, the gamemaster needs to be familiar with the contents of this book and the **Gamemaster's Compendium**; both gamemaster and players should be familiar with the **Player's Compendium**.

The contents of the Adventure Compendium are for the gamemaster's eyes only.

MAKING TESTS

During the course of the adventures contained in this book, whenever characters attempt to take actions such as casting a spell, swinging a sword at an opponent, tracking a Horror, or flirting with a barmaid, the gamemaster or the player rolls dice against a **Difficulty Number** to determine the action's outcome. These dice rolls are called **Action Tests** (see the **Game Concepts** chapter of the **Player's Compendium**, p. 18).

To make an Action Test, the player or gamemaster rolls the appropriate **Action dice** based on the **step number** of the ability being used. If the dice roll result is equal to or greater than the Difficulty Number, the test succeeds and the character accomplishes his action. If the result is less than the Difficulty Number, the character fails to accomplish his action. In tests that deal with magic, the result often determines the duration of a magical effect.

Frequently, a test result determines not only basic success or failure, but the degree of success. A test may have one of six result levels: Pathetic, Poor, Average, Good, Excellent, or Extraordinary. A **Poor** result usually indicates simple failure at the task. A **Pathetic** result, less than the Difficulty Number listed for a Poor result, is often bad enough to have unpleasant side effects. An **Average** result, equal to or barely exceeding the Difficulty Number, usually means the character only just accomplished his action. A somewhat better roll yields a **Good** result, and a total close to double the Difficulty Number means an **Excellent** result. To achieve an **Extraordinary** result requires an even better roll again.

Additionally, any result level greater than Average may give the character some additional gain for his actions, including valuable extra information. The amount of gain for each result level is determined by the gamemaster, unless specifically noted.

In many cases when the player characters must make a test, the required ability is given, followed by the Difficulty Number of the task in parentheses. For example, a Perception (8) Test means that a character must use his Perception step to make a test against a target Difficulty Number of 8. A result of 8 or better succeeds; anything else fails.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Aside from the **Player's** and **Gamemaster's Compendiums**, this book contains everything required to run the contained adventures. The pace of each story will often go very fast, much like a rollercoaster ride. To stay on top of the adventures' rapidly changing events, the gamemaster must know what happens in advance so he can hurl the unwitting characters into the next challenging situation before the players have time to think. The gamemaster should be familiar with the basic outline of the plot and know precisely which developments trigger later events. As always, the gamemaster should also be prepared to deal with the unexpected.

The following sections outline how the adventures are structured:

ENCOUNTERS AND EVENTS

The **Plot Synopsis** at the beginning of each adventure summarizes the story background and the most probable course of the story. The encounters that follow describe the situations and events the characters must deal with during the course of the adventure. Each encounter contains a summary of the action that occurs during the encounter, and also explains the encounter's objective. This overview is followed by four sections: Setting the Stage, Themes and Images, Behind the Scenes, and Troubleshooting.

The next section, **Setting the Stage**, contains a description of the encounter's surroundings and includes maps, if applicable. This section may also contain a narrative describing the player characters' location and what is happening to them as if the characters were actually there. Any special instructions for the gamemaster are highlighted.

Themes and Images helps the gamemaster set the mood and pacing for a particular encounter. It includes hints about imagery to use in the scene, emotions to convey, sounds, sensations, and so on. The information provided varies in form and content from scene to scene, ranging from general themes to specific sensory impressions.

Behind the Scenes explains what is really going on in each encounter. This section provides the gamemaster with all of the information he needs to run the encounter, such as specialized descriptions of locations and events, and statistics for any gamemaster characters the player characters may meet or creatures they may fight. If the players or gamemaster need a map to play an encounter, it appears here. As with **Setting the Stage**, any special instructions for the gamemaster are highlighted.

The final section of each encounter, **Troubleshooting**, offers suggestions to help the gamemaster get the adventure back on track should things go awry. For example, the characters may miss an important clue or lose a fight that they need to win. Most gamemasters will not want the player characters to get discouraged or killed off too easily. This section offers the gamemaster options for keeping the game going over trouble spots. The gamemaster can, of course, ignore these hints and invent his own solutions, or simply let the chips fall where they may. As noted earlier, however, the freeform nature of roleplaying means we can't anticipate everything the player characters might do! The gamemaster is again advised that he should be prepared to improvise if required.

GAME INFORMATION

The following sections provide additional information on the adventure, gamemaster characters, optional rules, and handouts.

Loose Ends

Following the encounters, this section sums up the consequences of the adventure and suggests ways in which the gamemaster might use the adventure's gamemaster characters and settings in future adventures.

Awarding Legend Points is also included in this section—guidelines for awarding the adventure's Legend